

property of certain persons contributing to the conflict in Cote d'Ivoire.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate.

Remarks at a Swearing-In Ceremony for Edward T. Schafer as Secretary of Agriculture

February 6, 2008

Thanks for the warm welcome. Before we begin the ceremony today, we turn our thoughts to those suffering from yesterday's tornadoes.

This was a bad storm that affected a lot of people in a variety of States. Our administration is reaching out to State officials. I just called the Governors of the affected States. I wanted them to know that this Government will help them. But more importantly, I wanted them to be able to tell the people in their States that the American people hold them up and—hold those who suffer up in prayer. Loss of life, a lot of loss of property—prayers can help, and so can the Government. And so today before we begin this important ceremony, I do want the people in those States to know the American people are standing with them.

It's good to be back here at the Department of Agriculture. I am—I first want to say how much I appreciate the hard and good work the people in this Department do on behalf of the American people.

I'm also pleased to witness the swearing-in of an outstanding public servant, the new leader for this Department, Secretary Ed Schafer. I welcome Ed's wife, Nancy, and all their family members. *[Laughter]* They got four children and eight grandchildren, which means he's got valuable experience when it comes to the food supply. *[Laughter]* I know Ed's family is proud of him, as am I, and I congratulate him on taking his place as America's 29th Secretary of Agriculture.

I appreciate the members of my Cabinet who have joined us. Thanks for coming. I very much appreciate the Members of the

Senate and the House who are here, and I know the Secretary does as well: Senator Harkin, Senator Chambliss. These men happen to be the ranking member of the—chairman and ranking member of the agricultural committee in the Senate. I appreciate Colin Peterson, chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, and I want to thank the other Members here as well. I appreciate very much the fact that John Block, former Secretary of Agriculture, has taken time to join us. Secretary, thanks for coming.

The roots of this Department stretch back to the Presidency of Abraham Lincoln. In 1862, President Lincoln established the first Federal Agency devoted to agriculture, and he called it "the people's department." Nearly a century-and-a-half later, the USDA can still be called "the people's department." With your nutrition programs and your support for farmers and ranchers, you help ensure that our people are healthy and well-fed. With your food safety measures, you give peace of mind to families across America. With your conservation efforts, you help preserve our natural resources.

Secretary Schafer is going to be a strong and effective leader in all these areas. I know him well; we're members of the ex-Governors club. *[Laughter]* He's a fellow you can trust. He's a skilled manager who knows how to focus and get results. Among his many other distinctions, he is the first North Dakotan to run this Department.

He had an interesting first night on the job; he spent it in the House Chamber listening to me give the State of the Union Address. *[Laughter]* I can report that he didn't go to sleep—*[laughter]*—and applauded just at the right times. *[Laughter]*

Our priorities for this Department are clear. We will work to make our strong agricultural sector even stronger. Ed understands what I know: It makes a lot of sense to make sure that we can grow our own food. It's in our national security interest that we're self-sufficient in food. Farm income, farm equity, and farm exports have reached all-time records. The best way to keep the ag economy growing is to open up new markets for America's crops and farm products around the world.

So Ed is going to join with other members of my administration to work to pass free trade agreements with Colombia and Panama and South Korea. We will support a successful conclusion of the Doha round of trade talks. Ed and I are going to work tirelessly to open up foreign markets for U.S. beef.

We recognize that farmers also have the potential to help our Nation solve one of the greatest challenges, and that is our dependence on foreign oil. I'd much rather our farmers be growing energy than trying to buy it from other parts of the world. So we will continue to work on—for renewable fuels, including a new generation of ethanol and biodiesel.

Finally, Ed understands the importance of a good farm bill. More than a year ago, we proposed a fiscally responsible farm bill that provides a strong safety net and makes important reforms to farm programs. Farm payments would be targeted to farmers who truly need them, especially those involved in production agriculture.

Congress is considering legislation now. It seems like to us it lacks reform. It spends too much money and raises taxes. It's critical for farmers and consumers to have a good farm bill in place. So Ed is going to work with members of both parties on a bill that spends people's money wisely, doesn't raise taxes, reforms and tightens subsidy payments—a farm bill that will benefit the entire economy. I'm confident we can come together to get a good farm bill. But if Congress sends me legislation that raises taxes or [does]* not make needed reforms, I'm going to veto it.

In all the work ahead, Ed can count on a strong partner in his Deputy, Chuck Conner. He's a talented public servant. He's devoted his life to agriculture issues, and he did a superb job of running this Department while Ed was being confirmed. And, Chuck, I want to thank you.

We also owe a debt of gratitude to Secretary Mike Johanns. In his 3 years here at this Department, Mike delivered impressive results for farmers and ranchers, from helping to expand trade to promoting biofuels to providing assistance after natural disasters. I

know he's enjoying his time in Nebraska; I hope he'll be back soon. *[Laughter]*

There's no doubt in my mind that Ed Schafer and the good men and women in this Department can build on these achievements. I thank him and his family for answering the call to public service once again. I know he's going to do a fine job here in "the people's department." Congratulations, my friend.

And now I ask Deputy Secretary Conner to administer the oath.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:07 a.m. at the Department of Agriculture. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary Schafer.

Remarks Honoring the 2007 Stanley Cup Champion Anaheim Ducks

February 6, 2008

Thank you all. Thanks for coming. Please be seated. Welcome to the White House. We're glad you're here. Like, have you noticed a lot of security around here? It's because the Vice President heard there were some Ducks around. *[Laughter]*

These Ducks are awfully mighty. It's such an honor to welcome you. I love welcoming champs to the White House, and these are clearly great champs. You know, the playoffs have got to be tough at that time of year, after you've played so long and your legs are a little tired—except you romped through the playoffs. I don't know if many Americans understand that, but this team went 16–5 through the first four rounds, became the first west coast team in the NHL to win the Stanley Cup. And that's a big deal.

And so it's my honor to welcome you to the White House. Glad you're here. I do want to welcome the owner, Henry Samueli; appreciate you coming. Thanks for bringing the girls. I had the privilege of being in pro sports as a baseball owner. I never had the chance to come to the White House as a baseball owner. *[Laughter]* I had a little trouble on the division crowns as a baseball owner. *[Laughter]* But I understand what a joy it must be to represent an ownership group, to watch a team you care about win the Stanley Cup, and win any championship.

* White House correction.